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REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON STATISTICAL CLASSIFICATION  
TO THE STATISTICAL COMMISSION.

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I Introduction.

The Third Session of the Committee on Statistical Classification met in Geneva from 20-22 April 1949. The following members were present:

Chairman: Mr. H. Marshall (Canada)

Members: Mr. G. Darmois (France)  
Mr. Ch. W. Verstege (Netherlands)  
Mr. T. Ryabushkin (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)  
Mr. H. Campion (United Kingdom)  
Mr. S.A. Rice (United States of America)

Representatives of Specialized Agencies:

Mr. R.M. Woodbury (ILO)  
Mr. H. Lacroix (ILO)  
Miss H. Jeter (IRO)

Representatives of Non-Governmental Organizations:

Mr. G. Goudswaard (ISI)

Secretariat:

Mr. W.R. Leonard - Representing the Assistant Secretary-General in charge of Economic Affairs;  
Mr. W.J. Bruce - Secretary to the Committee;  
Mr. P.J. Loftus - Statistical Office of the United Nations;  
Mr. J.N. Hancock - Rapporteur of the Group of Expert Consultants on Classification of Trade Statistics.

The records of these meetings are contained in documents E/CN.3/C.1/SR.4, E/CN.3/C.1/SR.5, E/CN.3/C.1/SR.6, E/CN.3/C.1/SR.7.

The Committee adopted the Provisional Agenda, document E/CN.3/C.1/11.

II Report on the Revision of the Minimum List of Commodities for International Trade Statistics.

In its consideration of this item the Committee had before it the following documents E/CN.3/C.1/13, E/CN.3/C.1/13 Add.1, E/CN.3/C.1/W.3.

At its third session the Statistical Commission was of the view that the Minimum List of Commodities for External Trade Statistics, prepared by the Committee of Statistical Experts of the League of Nations, should be re-examined and where necessary revised to make it more suitable for the analysis of the present character of international trade.

The Commission recommended in 1947 that as a first step a draft of a revised list should be prepared by the Secretariat and circulated to countries for comments. A revised list was circulated to all countries. Comments were received from 42 countries and from five interested international organizations.

These comments were then considered by a group of expert consultants assembled for that purpose in 1949 by the Secretary-General. The group of experts divided their work into two stages. They set out firstly to draw up a basic list of items which would be suited to the present circumstances of international commodity trade and secondly to determine how these items should be grouped into categories.

List of Items

In order to arrive at such a list of items the experts scrutinized the individual items of the League's Minimum List to rectify unsatisfactory definitions, to sub-divide items which embraced commodities now requiring separate identification, and to amalgamate those items or sub-items which no longer required separate identification.

There were 456 items plus 318 sub-items in the League's Minimum List. This compared with 592 items in the draft new list without

any sub-items. The results of the experts' deliberations were that about 275 items of the Minimum List were retained unaltered in the new list; 198 items were created by the sub-division of items (these included 98 sub-items of the Minimum List which were given the status of items); 93 items of the new list were formed by amalgamating items or sub-items of the Minimum List (these included 58 items which were formed by amalgamating sub-items); 26 items were formed by transposing parts of items or of sub-items of the Minimum List.

The Committee on Statistical Classification are of the opinion that the new list is generally acceptable. Before recommending that the items of the new list be finally adopted the Committee wished to have the views of the countries on their ability to prepare or re-assemble national data in terms of the items of the provisional standard list.

The Committee recommends that the Secretary-General be requested to circulate the items of the provisional standard list to countries with a view to obtaining their comments on these points in order that the Committee at its next session may make final recommendations to the Commission on these items.

#### Grouping of Items

The expert consultant group then turned to the question of the grouping of the new list of items. It was clear that the grouping of items in any scheme of classification was not likely to be ideal for all purposes. The expert consultants have suggested an arrangement of items which differs substantially from that of the Minimum List.

The Committee noted the views of the expert consultants on this question as set forth in paragraphs 4-6 of their report (document E/CN.3/C.1/13) and considered that the new arrangement proposed may be preferred by many countries. The Committee wished however, to consider further the preferences of individual countries on the question

of the grouping of items before making a final recommendation to the Statistical Commission.

The Committee therefore recommends that the preferences of countries on this question be ascertained by the Secretary-General so that a definite proposal on the grouping of items may be submitted to the fifth session of the Statistical Commission.

The member for the USSR abstained from voting on the adoption of the above recommendations.

#### Future action

The Committee wish to express their deep appreciation of the work done by the expert consultants in making their proposals for the revision of the Minimum List especially in view of the difficulties of reconciling different views.

At the next session the Committee wish to consider the further comments which have been received from countries as to what practical difficulties they may meet in introducing the new list. The Committee would also consider the views of countries on the proposed new grouping of items in order to make a final recommendation to the Commission.

### III Classification of Commodities for General Economic Analysis.

The Committee discussed the purpose and scope which such a classification of commodities might have on international statistical activities and its relation to classifications used for international trade statistics.

The Committee recommends that the Commission request the Secretary General to explore, possibly on the basis of a restricted group of commodities, the kinds of classifications which would provide useful information for economic analysis and to report on the applicability of such classifications for international use.

IV Classification of Occupations.

The Committee studied document E/CN.3/C.1/12.

Mr. Woodbury (ILO) and Mr. Lacroix (ILO) discussed various aspects of the draft progress report regarding the work undertaken by the ILO in preparing an international classification of occupations.

The Committee adopted the following resolution, the U.S.S.R. member abstaining.

The Committee on Statistical Classification received from representatives of the International Labour Organization a progress report upon the preparation of a standard international classification of occupations, together with a draft of such a classification.

The Committee is aware of the difficulties encountered in preparing the classification and it recommends to the Commission that the latter commend the International Labour Organization for the thought and efforts that have gone into the preparation of the draft. The Committee is nevertheless impressed with the urgent importance of compiling the occupational classification in time for it to be of use in connection with national censuses of population to be taken in the years 1950 and 1951. It recommends that the Commission express its regret that considerations of time will not permit further collaboration between the Commission and the International Labour Organization on the completion of the draft.

It further recommends that the Commission request the International Labour Organisation

- i) to keep the Secretary General of the United Nations informed of subsequent stages in the progress of the proposed classification, and
- ii) to take account of any suggestion which may be transmitted to it by the Secretary General.

V Alphabetical Index for Commodity Classification.

The Committee recommended that the Statistical Commission request the Secretary-General to make arrangements for the preparation, in consultation with interested specialized agencies and other interested international organizations, of a list of terms, for multi-lingual use, alphabetically arranged, to serve as a manual or code book showing the particular articles of trade included in each item of the Standard List of Commodities for International Trade Statistics, and that some priority be given to this work within available Secretariat resources.